

## FAFSA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Throughout this message, “you” and “your” refer to the student. “School” refers to the college

### 1. Where can I go to get assistance if I have questions while I am completing the FAFSA?

- On the home page, [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov), go to —Contact Us!! at the top of the page. This page lists all of the available options for getting additional assistance.
- You can get live help through a secure online chat session with one of our customer service representatives.
- You can call us at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). TTY users can call 1-800-730-8913.
- Lastly, you also can e-mail us with any technical issues you may have while you are completing the application. The address is [FederalStudentAid/CustomerService@ed.gov](mailto:FederalStudentAid/CustomerService@ed.gov).

### 2. Why does the Department of Education ask for income information from the year before I go to school?

The law requires that this information be used, since studies have consistently shown that verifiable income tax information from the most recently completed tax year (2010 for the 2011-12 award year) is more accurate than projected (2011) information and provides a reasonable basis for determining family financial strength in calculating the Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

### 3. What should I (the student) do if my family has unusual circumstances that aren't mentioned in the application?

If you or your family has unusual circumstances (such as loss of employment, loss of benefits, death, or divorce), complete the FAFSA to the extent that you can and submit it as instructed.

Then talk to the financial aid administrator (FAA) at the school you plan to attend.

If your family's circumstances have changed from the tax year 2010, the FAA may decide on a case-by-case basis to adjust data elements used to calculate your EFC. Any adjustment the FAA makes must relate only to your individual circumstances and not to any conditions that exist for a whole class of students. The FAA's decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

#### 4. What should I (the student) do if I cannot get my parent's data to report on the FAFSA?

If you are considered a dependent student and have no contact with your parents and are unable to provide your parents data on the FAFSA, you may answer the remaining student questions. Sign and submit the form for processing. Your application will be incomplete and no EFC will be calculated, however, the financial aid offices at the schools listed on your FAFSA will still receive your data.

##### Note:

- Not living with your parents or the fact that your parents do not want to provide their information on your FAFSA, are not considered special circumstances.
- Examples of special circumstances are your parent or parents are incarcerated or you had to leave home because of an abusive situation.

#### 5. If I live with an aunt, uncle, or grandparent, should that relative's income be reported on my FAFSA?

Generally, no.

You can only report your birth parents' or adoptive parents' income on your FAFSA.

Only if a relative has adopted you and is now your adoptive parent can you report that person's information on your FAFSA. However, you must report for question 44(j) any cash support given by relatives except food and housing.

#### 6. I'm not sure if I am interested in work-study during the school year. What should I enter for the questions asking if I am interested in being considered for work-study?

Some schools use the answer about work-study on the FAFSA to construct a financial aid package for you.

Answering —Yes to being interested in work-study does not obligate you to accept a work-study position. It usually just means that the school will consider offering you a work-study job as part of your financial aid package.

If you do indicate on the application that you are interested in work-study, you can change your mind and not accept the work-study job later.

Keep in mind that if you answer —No to the work-study question when you apply—and subsequently change your mind—a work-study job may not be available if all of the work-study funds at the school have been awarded to other students.

## 7. What if I live with a girlfriend or boyfriend who pays the rent?

You should not report any information for a friend or roommate unless the two of you are actually married or are considered to have a common-law marriage under state law.

You must report in Question 44(j) any cash support given by the friend, except food and housing. You would have to report the rent the roommate paid on your behalf.

## 8. What's the difference between cash support and in-kind support?

**Cash support** is support given either in the form of money or money that is paid on your (the student's) behalf.

You must report cash support as untaxed income. Thus, if a friend or relative gives you grocery money, it must be reported as untaxed income in Question 44(j). If the friend or relative pays your electric bill or part of your rent, you must also report those payments.

Examples of in-kind support are free food or housing that a family receives, usually in exchange for work or services. You usually don't report such support.

However, the application does require you to report the value of housing a family receives as compensation for a job. The most common example is free housing or a housing allowance provided to military personnel or members of the clergy, which is required to be reported in Question 44(g).

## 9. When is student aid considered income?

Generally, grants and scholarships that do not exceed tuition, fees, books, and required supplies are not considered to be taxed or untaxed income.

If you have an ROTC scholarship, a private scholarship, or any other kind of grant or scholarship, that grant or scholarship will be considered as an available resource by the financial aid office when packaging aid.

You should report grants and scholarships you reported on your tax return. You should then report these items as exclusions from income in Question 43(d): Student's 2010 Additional Financial Information. These amounts will be treated as exclusions from your income.

## 10. I am now a U.S. citizen but have an Alien Registration Number (A-Number). How do I indicate this on the application?

Indicate that you are a U.S. citizen; do not provide your A-Number.

### 11. I'm going to get married this summer. How do I answer the question that asks if I am married?

You must answer Question 46 based on your marital status on the day you complete and sign your FAFSA.

Answer —Yes!! if you are married on the day you complete and sign your FAFSA, otherwise, answer —No!! If you answer —No!! and then marry.

After you originally file your FAFSA, you cannot change your answer.

When you apply in a subsequent year and remain married, you will file as a married student at that time.

### 12. If I'm an emancipated minor, am I now independent?

If you can provide a copy of a court's decision that you are or were an emancipated minor as determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you may meet the definition of an independent student. You would answer —Yes!! to question 53 if you are currently an emancipated minor. You would also answer —Yes!! if you were an emancipated minor immediately before you reached the age of being an adult in your state. The court must be located in your state of legal residence at the time the court's decision was issued. You may be asked to provide a copy of the court's decision.

### 13. What if I am in legal guardianship, am I now independent?

If you can provide a copy of a court's decision that you are or were in a legal guardianship as determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you may meet the definition of an independent student.

You would answer —Yes!! to question 54 if you are currently in legal guardianship. You would also answer —Yes!! if you were in legal guardianship immediately before you reached the age of being an adult in your state. The court must be located in your state of legal residence at the time the court's decision was issued.

You may be asked to provide a copy of the court's decision.

### 14. If I was a National Guard or Reserve enlistee and was called to active duty or was an active duty military member, am I considered a veteran for purposes of completing the FAFSA?

Yes. If you were a member of the National Guard or a Reserve enlistee called to active duty for other than state or training purposes, and were released under a

condition other than dishonorable, you are considered a veteran for FAFSA purposes.

**15. If I am currently serving in the National Guard or as a Reserve enlistee and am called to active duty, am I considered an independent student for purposes of completing the FAFSA?**

Yes. If you are currently serving in the National Guard or as a Reserve enlistee and are called to active duty for other than state or training purposes, you would answer —Yes!! to Question 49 and would then be considered an independent student.

**16. I'll be filing a tax return this year but I probably won't get around to it until April. How should I answer the financial questions? Should I wait to fill out this form after I've filed my tax return?**

Ideally, you should complete a FAFSA after you've done your tax return.

**17. If my parents are divorced, whose information do I need?**

Report the information of the parent with whom you lived the most during the 12 months preceding the date you completed the FAFSA.

It does not make a difference which parent claims you as a dependent for tax purposes.

If you did not live with either parent or lived equally with each parent, the parental information must be provided for the parent from whom you received the most financial support during the preceding 12 months or the parent from whom you received the most support the last time support was given.

**18. I am entering financial information for my mother and stepfather on the FAFSA. Should I give my father's Social Security number (SSN) and last name, or my stepfather's?**

You should provide the SSN and last name of the same person or people for whom you are reporting financial information. In this case, provide the SSNs and names of your mother and stepfather.

### 19. What should I do if my parent with whom I live is remarried and my stepparent refuses to supply information?

If you are a dependent student and your parent is remarried, the stepparent's information must be included or you will not be considered for federal student financial aid.

If you believe that your situation is unique or unusual other than the stepparent's simple refusal to provide the requested information, you should discuss the matter further with your financial aid administrator.

### 20. How does a family decide who should be counted in the household size?

Anyone in the immediate family who receives more than 50% support from a dependent student's parents or an independent student and spouse may be counted in the household size even if that person does not reside in the house.

For example,

- a. A sibling who is over 24 but still receives the majority of his/her support from the parents can be included.
- b. Siblings who are dependent (as defined by the FAFSA) as of the date you apply for aid are also included, regardless of whether they receive more than 50% of their support from the parents.
- c. Any other person who resides in the household and receives more than 50% support from the parents may also be counted, as long as they will continue to reside with your parents and the support is expected to continue through June 30, 2012.
- d. An unborn child who will be born during the 2011-12 award year may also be counted in the household size if the parents, or independent student and spouse, will provide more than half of the child's support through the end of the 2011-12 award year (June 30, 2012).

Household size and tax exemptions are not necessarily the same. Exemptions look at the previous year or tax year and household size refers to the school year for which the student is applying for aid.

**21. My parents separated four months ago. I live with my mother. My parents filed a joint tax return and claimed me as an exemption. Do I report income for both parents, or for just my mother?**

Report only your mother's income and asset information because you lived with her the most during the past 12 months. Use a W-2 Form or other record(s) to determine her share of the income reported and taxes paid on the tax return.

**22. If I (the student) am separated but filed a joint tax return, how is the information reported?**

You should give only your portion of the exemptions, income and taxes paid.

**23. Who qualifies to be counted in the number in school?**

Any person (other than your parents) who is counted in the household and will be attending any term of the academic year at least half time qualifies to be counted.

The person must be working toward a degree or certificate leading to a recognized education credential at a postsecondary school eligible to participate in the federal student aid programs.

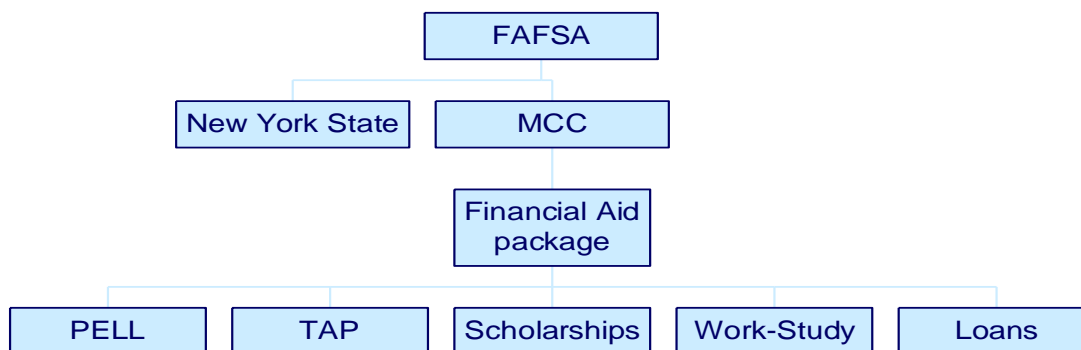
You (the student) need not be enrolled half time to be counted in the number in school.

**24. When does my school have to receive the results from my application?**

Your school must have your information by your last day of enrollment in 2011-12, or by mid-September 2012, whichever is earlier. If your school has not received your application information electronically, you must submit your paper SAR to the school by the deadline. But do not wait until the deadline date so you have plenty of time to submit your information and make any necessary corrections. Either the electronic record, the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR), or the paper SAR that has been processed by the Department must have an official EFC.

Once the school receives your information, it will use your EFC to determine the amount of your federal grant, loan or work-study award, if you are eligible.

The FAA will send you a financial aid award letter explaining the aid the school is offering.



**25. What if I don't get a *Student Aid Report (SAR)* or *SAR Acknowledgement*, or I need another copy of that form?**

If you do not receive an e-mail with a link to your SAR (if you provided an e-mail address on your FAFSA), or your paper SAR or *SAR Acknowledgement* in the mail within two-to-three weeks after submitting your application, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). If you have a touch-tone phone, you can use the automated system to find out whether your application has been processed or to request duplicate copies of your report. You will need to provide your Social Security number and the first two letters of your last name. You can also check the status of your FAFSA and print a copy of your SAR at **[www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)**. If you apply using *FAFSA on the Web*, you will receive a confirmation page with a confirmation number after you select —Submit My FAFSA Now. This confirmation guarantees that your application has been received by the U.S. Department of Education, and the confirmation number can be used by the Federal Student Aid Information Center to track your application if necessary.

**26. What if I think somebody is misusing federal student aid funds?**

If you have reason to suspect fraud, waste or abuse involving federal student aid funds, you should call the U.S. Department of Education's Inspector General's toll-free hotline at: 1-800-MIS-USED (1-800-647-8733)